9:Fosbrooke G-5 (1936-1948) 1948 FL12 Masai FL12
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frequently fighting, contact must have been limited. But that is not the case to-day. When Mbeiya's boma was infected with measles in 1935 he hired a lorry and himself travelled to Nairobi and beyond, bringing back a Kikuyu medicine man to cleanse his boma for him. Kutata (24) is reputed to have obtained a charm to kill Mbeiya from a Sukuma witch doctor in Pare, and Letinga (23) and Baloni (28) hired a car to go and interview this doctor, in order to verify the rumour and/or to obtain charms stronger than those given to Kutata.

The cult of the laibon must therefore have much in common with the beliefs and practices of neighbouring tribes, and I put it forward as a possibility that, with further contacts, the institution may eventually end up merely as an instrument of common witchcraft.

In the absence of rational scientific explanations for the many natural phenomena which surround them, — drought and disease, fecundity and sterility, birth and death, — it is natural that the Masai, in common with all other primitive peoples, should regard the unseen with deep fear and awe, and grasp at any opportunity offered which purports to control these mysterious factors in their lives. They believe the laibon to be capable of controlling these unseen forces; he is the intermediary between themselves and the supernatural. His blessing will assure prosperity, his charms and rituals can alleviate an existing calamity, and his power of foretelling the future enables steps to be taken to ward off an impending catastrophe.

It is extremely difficult to ascertain the strength of these beliefs amongst individual Masai, but it is considered that the majority of the Kisonko hold them implicitly. Some areas, e.g. Kibaya, have a reputation for consulting the laibon more frequently than others, but none the less the beliefs are general. The practice of the ritual may fall into temporary abeyance in certain areas, but the belief remains, and manifests itself in outward form on the advent of a drought or of a personal reminder from the laibon. Modern contacts have as yet done little to shake these beliefs. A few Christian Masai are completely sceptical; others may have their doubts, but when the occasion arises feel that they had better do what they are told, 'to be on the safe side'. One of the chief factors which guarantees the maintenance of these beliefs is the age grade system. From early adolescence the future leaders of the tribe, the *laigwenak* and *ingobir*, are frequently taken to the laibon by their guardians, the *il payo* elders. The lengthy discussions beforehand, the actual journey, the reverential attitude of the elders to the laibon, the ritual, the mysterious voice in the darkened hut foretelling the future, all these must make a deep impression on the youths. This in turn is spread to the rest of their age-mates when they return home and perform the ordained ceremony.

There seems little doubt therefore that so long as the age-grade system is maintained in its present form these beliefs, and the consequent power they give the laibon, will be perpetuated. True, as education progresses, this power will decrease, but disbelief will dissociate a youth from his age-mates, and consequently his influence on others will be small, as the

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915 work. Every day they receive the best food in abundance. Here,
919 however, in accordance with God's command, each one may marry only one wife. The other world, like the earth, is divided into individual lands, each of which is intended for the souls of one people, so that the person who arrives there will find his deceased relatives. Bad human beings are denied this paradise; they are driven into a barren, waterless desert. Those not so bad also gain entry into paradise through God's grace, though not to live in carefree happiness, but to do hard work.

919 This is the Masai religious doctrine as it is handed down and taught by the old men. The supernatural explanation of natural phenomena has nothing to do with the religious doctrine. In them
• [981] one sees only the works or expressions of God and therefore observes at least the more powerful ones with something like reverential awe. It should be expressly emphasized that it is only a matter of this and not, say, demonolatry, the deification of personified natural forces.

976 The sun (<u>eŋg elon</u>) is regarded largely as a reflection of God.
821 Like the gloriously colored morning and evening horizon. The clouds mask God before the eyes of mankind, they surround him. From them he looks down on the bustle of the earth. This seems to explain why the Masai call the redness of the morning and evening sky '<u>Ng ai nanyoi</u>, the clouds '<u>Ng ai nabor</u>, and the blue, cloudless sky '<u>Ng ai</u> <u>ŋarok</u>. These literally mean "the red God," "the white God," and the "black God," but should properly be translated as "the divine red," "the divine white," and "the divine black," for actually the people see in these phenomena no gods and nothing godlike or to be worshipped like him. It should also be mentioned here that God, who in ordinary speech is always called '<u>Ng ai</u>, is often called '<u>Ng</u> <u>ai ŋarok</u> or <u>Nai ŋarok</u>, that is, the black God. In the prayer songs to be discussed later. The Masai themselves do not know any explanation for these strange word-formations, and I have not been able to learn anything from them from which an interpretation could be derived.

/306/ More infrequent than the above explanation for the sun is the one that it and the moon are servants of God, whose duty is to illuminate the earth. In this the sun is regarded as feminine, the